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injustice. Take, for instance, the case of the Vice-President of the Academy, who exhibits four different pictures, every one of which is hung upon the "line," in many cases to the exclusion of meritorious works. The President's large landscape by no means deserves the prominent position it occupies upon the Academy walls, if any at all. Mr. Hicks' "Dr. Kane" could with advantage change places with Mr. Powell's "McClellan." Many more instances are there, but it is needless to recapitulate them here; they have been often and bitterly enough commented upon already. Let us, then, let them rest and hope for better things in the future.

"Do we not want stronger men in the Council?" "Ay, there's the rub." You do want stronger men, gentlemen, and have but to look carefully among your ranks to find them. Some there are in the Council of the present year: Whittredge, Johnson, Rogers, Elliot, Colman, and McEntee, but these are but a handful of wheat amidst a bushel of chaff. The remedy is in your own hands; such of you as have a vote in the management of the Academy; with you rests the power, the duty, to oust the machines of routine and put in their places strong, vigorous, energetic men. If this is not done, with you rests the fault, the ignominy. With you the blame; upon your heads must fall the storm of indignation, not upon those of the Council, who, having got their places, will stick to them. The eyes of the American art world is upon you; look to it you do your duty! Unflinching, unhesitatingly, casting aside all feeling of personal friendship, and working only for the lasting good and honor of art!

The present exhibition closes on the Fourth of the next month. The Academy doors are to open again in the Fall. To what shall they open? The continuance of the old system, or the beginning of a new era? An era which shall have for its watchword, "Art, Justice, Energy and Perseverance." Make your choice, members of the National Academy. Two paths lie before you; one wide, open, easy, and leading to obloquy and disgrace. The other narrow, tortuous, difficult, and leading to honor and fame. Make your choice, and according to that choice shall you be judged in after-time by the world of art that is to come!

PALETTA.

MATTERS THEATRIC.

The historical case of Miss Flora McFlimsey, who had "nothing to wear," sinks into utter insignificance by the side of that of the critic just at present who has "nothing to write about." Seldom has there been such an utter dearth of novelty in the theatrical market.

This is the attractive programme of the last week.

At the French Theatre, the Arabs tumble.

At Wallack's, Daniel Bryant dances.

At the New York Theatre, the Worrell Sisters do ditto.

At the Olympic, "Treasure Trove" is turned up for the last time this evening.

At the Broadway Theatre, Miss Lucille Western has been delighting the great unwashed by her, to say the least, vigorous personation of Nancy Sykes, in that most revolting of all plays, "Oliver Twist."

Meantime patriotic young America is investing its spare coppers in those inventions of the evil one, fire crackers and torpedoes; to say nothing of pistols, cannons, and gunpowder. Truly the Fourth of July is a fine day for patriotic young America, it may blow off its fingers, and possibly by some lucky chance kill itself; but then these are but harmless amusements and should be encouraged by all right-minded and patriotic heads of families.

SHUGGE.

(From the London Musical World.)

THOUGHTS AND SPECULATIONS,

BY ROBERT SCHUMANN.

AND NOW a few words on something nobler—a thing to bring a man into tune again with faith, and hope, and love of his kind—under the shadow of which; the weary soul may rest as under a palm-grove, and see the glowing landscape spread at his feet; I mean the St. Paul of Mendelssohn, a work of the greatest purity, the offspring of peace and love. It would be a mistake, besides being unfair to the composer, to compare it, even remotely; to the oratorios of Handel or Bach. They are alike just as much as all kinds of sacred music, all churches, all pictures of the Madonna are alike; but Bach and Handel had reached maturity when they began to write, whereas Mendelssohn was still a mere youth. The work of the young artist whose imagination is overflowing with graceful images, and to whom life and the future are still full of charm, cannot fairly be compared with a work of an earlier and severer period, by one of those divine masters who, from their seats among the stars, looked back over a long and hallowed life.

I have already spoken at length of the general treatment of the subject, of the adoption of the *choral* from the old oratorios, of the distribution of the choruses and solos among the actors and spectators, and of the characters of the several personages. It has been rightly remarked that the chief drawbacks to the general effect of the work are to be found in the first half; that the subordinate part of St. Stephen, if not absolutely throwing St. Paul into the background, diminishes his importance; that Saul is presented more in the character of a convert than of a converter; also that the oratorio is too long and might with advantage be divided into two. A most inviting subject for the critics is the poetical manner in which the appearances of our Lord are treated (by a chorus of trebles and altos); but surely such speculations only spoil the idea, while it would be impossible to wound the com-

poser's feelings more easily than in this, one of his most beautiful inspirations. To my mind nothing can be more appropriate than to present God as speaking with many voices, and revealing His will through a choir of angels; just as in painting, His presence is indicated more poetically by cherubs hovering in the upper part of the picture than by the representation of an old man, or by the so-called sign of the Trinity, &c. Where the reality is unattainable, it is surely allowable to use the most beautiful symbol within reach. It has also been objected that some of the chorales in *St. Paul* lose their simple character by the ornaments with which Mendelssohn has adorned them. As if chorales were not just as well adapted to express joy and confidence as earnest supplication! as if there were not every difference between such a *choral* as "Sleepers, wake," and such another as "In deep distress;" or as if a work of art had no purpose to fulfil beyond those of a parish choir! Then, again, people wanted to make out that *St. Paul* was not even a "Protestant Oratorio," but only a "Concert Oratorio," which suggested to some wag the happy middle course of calling it "a Protestant-concert-Oratorio."

It is always possible to make objections, and even plausible ones, and the industry of the critics deserves every respect. But granting all that can be said, how much there is in the oratorio with which the most capricious can find no fault! Besides its ruling spirit, the deeply religious feeling which pervades it, consider the masterly way in which, from a musical point of view, every situation is brought out, the uninterrupted flow of noble melody, the intimate connection of words and sounds, speech and music, so that the whole thing seems actually embodied before you; think of the grace which it breathes throughout, the admirable grouping of the characters, the endless variety of colour in the instrumentation; realize its perfectly mature style, and playful mastery over all forms of composition, and then say if there is any cause to be discontented.

I have only one thing to add. The music of *St. Paul* is, on the average, so easy to understand, so popular and so effective, that it almost seems as if the main idea of its composer throughout had been to interest the public. Now, noble as this aim undoubtedly is, it may, if indulged in, rob his future compositions of that power and inspiration which is found in the works of those who, regardless of either aim or limits, gave themselves up singly to their great subject. Lastly, it must not be forgotten that Beethoven wrote a *Mount of Olives* as well as a *Missa Solennis*; and bearing this in mind, we may well believe that as Mendelssohn the youth has written a fine oratorio, Mendelssohn the man will write another that shall be still nobler.* Till then let us be content with what we have, and profit from it, and enjoy it.

A PANTOMIME IN FLORENCE.

CORNELIUS O'DOWD ascribes the decline of the public interest in the contemporary drama to the comparative tameness of its characters and plots, when viewed by the side of the real actors and events in the political life of the present day. If it be true that the grand events of his national story only quickened an Athenian's relish for *The*

* A prophecy since fulfilled in the *Layan*.

Persians; if it be undoubted that the youth of the Elizabethan age enjoyed the Shaksperian drama all the more because that country had helped the Hollander in his danger and despair, we may feel tolerably certain that, in our own day, like causes will produce like effects; that contemporary sublimity and shabbiness, contemporary magnitude and meanness, far from deadening, will rather enliven the creations of the scenic world, and will assist in reproducing "the very age and body of the time—its form and pressure."

But let us pass from theories to facts. The highest form of dramatic genius is rare in all ages and countries. The lower (but still how rare!) productions of highly developed dramatic talent—the creations uniting thorough knowledge of human nature with an ordinary insight into the spirit of the time, and a practical command of stage effect—this, too, is the possession of comparatively few. No wonder, then, if neither degree of excellence is at the present moment to be met with on the Italian stage. But individual excellence in dramatic literature is one thing, and a general taste and tendency for the drama is another. At present I am only concerned with the second; and in reference to it I must chronicle the fact that the stirring events of recent Italian history—the new political life and strong national aspirations of these 26,000,000 of Italians—so far from blunting their relish for theatrical representations, have given them an infinitely greater relish, that they almost seem more bent on dramatizing contemporary politics than on commenting and criticising them; that a three-act play seems to be instinctively regarded as a better medium for making political capital than a leading article or a parliamentary speech;—in a word, that the Italian stage (as regards its spirit, of course, I say nothing of the execution), if following its present course, bids fair to treat the party struggles of the day after the fashion of *The Knights*, and its literary phases after the fashion of *The Frogs*. Gherardi del Testa's admirable comedy, *Le Coscienze Elastiche*, satirizing the reactionary coteries, though the earliest, is certainly the best, of these political plays; but the name of the more recent additions to the category is "legion." We have had crowded houses night after night this season to enjoy and applaud the play of Fambri, the member for Venice, entitled *Il Caporale di Settimana*, a stinging exposure of the abuses in the military administration; and within a few days of each other Fabio Uccelli and Martini have favored us with dramas on electioneering practices and parliamentary corruption—both of them, by the way, most unceremoniously and most unanimously damned.

And now a Milanese playwright has given us a capital pantomime—a stunning, splitting shrieking pantomime. *Se sa Minga* ("One Doesn't Know")—a phrase constantly in the mouth of your true Milan burgher—is the title of this satirical review of 1866. All who love a hearty laugh should welcome this carnival extravaganza with becoming gratitude, for it almost seemed as if Italian pantomime was to become a thing of the past, and that the dramatic student would have to seek the illustration of Italian mimic powers in Cardinal Wiseman's charming little essay, or of the Italian command of broad grins in Leonardo's unrivalled collection in the Brera. But there shall still be cakes and ale though virtuous senates impeach Persano, and ginger shall be hot in the mouth, at least so long

as *Se sa Minga* has its run at the Theatre Nuovo. You meet hundreds coming away disappointed from the theatre door as you comfortably make your way to the stall which you have prudently secured. You are told that last night a stalwart cavalry officer fainted away from the crush in the pit, and the anecdote makes your stall feel roomier than before. At length, amidst breathless expectations, the curtain rises. You see, surrounded by all the materials and objects of her criticism—guns, swords, crowns, tiaras, printing presses—busily engaged in her task, the Muse of History. An aged man totters in, and falls at her feet, imploring her forgiveness, at least her toleration. It is poor old '66, evidently on his last legs. He has an awkward consciousness that, in more ways than one, he has made a great fool of himself; he would gladly leave a good name behind him; he is afraid of the judgment of History; he would fain be white-washed; but the thing can't be done. History refers him to her father, Time, who, considering his years, is a hale and hearty old gentleman; his scythe somewhat blunted by the rough work it has done at Palermo, but his wings in capital flying order, the more so that the Italian journalists no longer pluck out the feathers; they have long ago exchanged the quill for the more expeditious scissors! A violent altercation ensues between '66 and Time—the former protesting that it is very hard he should be hanged, like the dog with the bad name; it is not his fault, but that of those lazy ministers and deputies, if so many of the convents which he had promised to suppress still remain open. But by this time the kind woman's heart of his daughter is evidently getting softened. If she cannot efface from her page the errors of his past life, she will at least pass them in array as a monitory warning to his son, that extremely promising youngster '67. The characters and events of old '66 shall flit, as in a magic lantern, before the eyes of the young '67. To assist him in his judgment, he is formally introduced to the representatives of Public Opinion (a very seedy crew they are!) who chant in chorus "*Se sa Minga*," the constantly recurring answer and the constantly recurring question, "What is the use of the circumlocution office? Why are such men made admirals?" &c. At this stage of the performance the drama received last night a rather startling illustration by the distribution in the pit of the evening papers containing the votes of the Senate on the two last heads of the Persano impeachment. Then follow in rapid succession Fashion, attired in a dress of the peculiar upholstery pattern, and a bonnet of the liliputian dimensions with which the past year favored us,—the *Africane*, by whose wild notes and outlandish attire little '67 is sorely frightened, though told she is the best thing of the last twelve-month, but who is not without her practical uses, it being, she affirms, her mission to teach geography to the young Florentine noblemen at the opera of the Pergola. But now we are shifting into the financial crisis: you see its effects in that solitary coin which comes trembling on the stage—*ultimus Romanorum*—the last man, or rather the last child—he is but a little one—that is the last *Napoleon d'or*. Poor, helpless, houseless wanderer! He is crying to be taken home. "I want to go to my home. Take me home, kind ladies and gentlemen; take me to my own home." "And where is your home?"

asks little '67 compassionately. "My home is the National Bank, and they want to put me in the Numismatic Museum." A sudden trembling comes over the poor child; he seems to see his enemy, the *agioteur*. He rushes off, and on his flight the stage is suddenly filled by a chorus of postage and receipt stamps, the improvised substitutes of a metallic currency. They sing a capital chorus, which never fails to be lustily enclosed. However, in a scuffle which they have with the dreaded *agioteur*, they stand a chance of coming badly off, did not the notes of the People's Bank come to the rescue. And now the scene again changes, and little '67 has shown to him the architectural changes commenced in Florence during his father's lifetime. We have a view of the old city walls almost razed to the ground by the workmen in the employ of the Florence Land and Public Works Company. "But has your work," asks the little fellow, "been only one of destruction?" "As yet it has," is the reply, "but only wait a little, and you shall see—what you shall see." Whereupon there is straightway presented to him another scene, the New Florence, as the decorative scene-painter has imagined it—a series of most artistically grouped obelisks and fountains. I cannot say—if I might judge from the remarks generally made in my hearing—that this style of architecture seemed to be regarded as the one best adapted to the wants of the citizens, for obelisks, however interesting in an antiquarian point of view, are perhaps the form of building least appropriate for a comfortable modern dwelling-house; and in the matter of water, we are so extremely hard-up for drinking and culinary purposes, that the lavish expenditure of the fluid in ornamental fountains, calls up feelings greatly akin to those of the fabled Tantalus. And to an audience composed of respectable middle-class citizens, who are literally hungering and thirsting for house-room, and cruelly mulcted in their moderate salaries and savings for house-rent, this scene in "*Se sa Minga*," like the treacherous groves and streams of a mirage, only augmented the horrors of the desert.

The second or purely political part of the extravaganza was less entertaining than the earlier ones. We had the reactionary monster, Ignorance; the "Consorteria," a Government clique; Custozza and Lissa, the Affondatore, the Prussian needle-gun—all vigorously represented, and of course the play ended with a view of the Roman capitol, and the cross of Savoy resplendent above the same. Shall we see that in 1867?—" *Se sa Minga*."

AMUSEMENTS.

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